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Autor: Meier, W.
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Students' X'mas Dinner & Ball

at the

Prince's Galleries, Piccadilly, W.1

on

FRIDAY, DECEMBER, 17th 1937.

President Education Dept. : W. MEIER



"O Goldne Jugendzeit!"

What a jolly Party this year's Xmas Dinner and Ball of the Students of the Swiss Mercantile Society College was.

To those who have, in virtue of their office, to attend a good many functions in the Swiss Colony, an evening like the one spent last Friday at Prince's Galleries, is a tonic in more than one respect.

First of all one meets an entirely different set of people, because the majority of those who attend are young people who are remaining but for a short while in this great Metropolis; they are, so to say "*membres de passage*" of our London Colony; not that one should tire of seeing the faces of old and trusted friends, or compatriots who have for many years adorned the various Swiss functions, but a little change, from time to time, acts as a tonic.

Secondly, to those, to whom the years slowly but surely begin to pile up, an evening spent in the midst of glorious youth, kindles so many happy memories of years long since gone.

I could not help but recall those carefree happy days when I too, was a student.

In those days one was apt to look at life through rose coloured glasses, the spirit of youth, with its glorious optimism saw no boundaries. Life, the big task master, has since destroyed many a happy dream, and ideals which were cherished succumbed to the hard facts of daily toils, but nevertheless some of these ideals and dreams have ridden the storm, and they were recalled on that memorable Friday. —

A short reception was held previous to the dinner, which enabled everyone to get acquainted with "Who was Who." There was too the Xmas spirit prevalent, that spirit which draws us nearer to each other; somehow or other everybody gets more polite, I noticed for instance, that for the last few days the postman is "most obliging," even the dustman who at times forgets to call, is very regular and even greets me with a cheery "good morning Sir," the milkman puts on a special "yodle," and says: "It's a fine morning," although it is a foggy one.

I am somehow a little suspicious about this "spirit of goodwill," but in these festive days one should not harbour any *arrière pensées*.

It sounds horrid but it is nevertheless true, that one of the principal items at a Banquet is the "food," well that side of the "show" met with no disappointment, it was both excellent and plentiful.

As an innovation, I believe, the organisers dispensed with a musical programme during the dinner, which enabled the jolly revellers to have a pleasant table conversation in peace and quietness.

For the last two years, I made, what some of my friends deigned to call "nasty" remarks about the Swiss Flag and the Union Jack, which used to be prominently displayed, and which looked to me none too clean, well I looked in vain for these patriotic emblems, either they have not been cleaned, or they were forgotten, in any case the organisers played for safety, which goes to prove that they have in one way or another taken to heart my former criticism. —

The usual toast to H. M. the King and to the President of the Swiss Confederation and the Federal Council, were given by the Chairman, Mr. W. Meier, and both toasts received a hearty response.

Towards the end of the dinner, Mr. W. Meier, Chairman of the Education Committee, who on rising received a very hearty ovation, addressed the company as follows:—

"The Annual Dinner and Ball is the last and also the most important function of the College every year. Very appropriately it is held when the year draws to an end and one is looking back upon the labours of the year that goes out. But we are assembled here this evening entirely for pleasure and enjoyment and I hope you have all brought with you that happy disposition which is known as Christmas feeling. In this spirit I wish to welcome everyone present. I trust that in times to come you will recall this gathering as one of the most pleasant memories of 1937.

I understand that we are slightly more numerous to-night than during recent years,

which is partly due to the larger number of students at the College and partly to the presence of many past students and members of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

As your Chairman I have the privilege to extend a special welcome to our distinguished guests, and I take this opportunity to say a few words about some of those who take a very active part in the affairs of the College, without, perhaps, being known to many of the students.

Our company would be incomplete without Dr. Rezzonico, Counsellor of Legation and Commercial Attaché. Whenever the Education Committee or the Principal apply to him for his advice or help the response is immediate and complete. — You probably know that Switzerland is negotiating a new Trade Treaty with Great Britain and Dr. Rezzonico as *Chef de la Division Economique* of the Swiss Legation is taking a prominent part in the discussions. I am sure you will all agree with me if I express the wish that these proceedings will have a successful conclusion for the benefit of both countries.

In view of the many calls upon Dr. Rezzonico's time we appreciate it all the more that he has come to spend this evening with us.

Unfortunately, the Swiss Minister, M. Paravicini, who intended to be here to-night has found it impossible to come, but I would ask Dr. Rezzonico to convey to him our greetings and the Education Committee's thanks for all he and the members of his staff do for us throughout the year.

I am pleased to welcome in our midst the popular President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Mr. Steinmann.

I regret to say, however, that this year we are without the presence of Mr. DE Brunner, a Trustee and Honorary Member of the Society. As one of the founders of the College and still one of its most active sponsors Mr. DE Brunner has regularly attended these Annual Dinners for many years but is prevented from doing so on this occasion.

On the other hand, I am glad to extend a hearty welcome to the Chairman of the House Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Council, Mr. Boos, who is accompanied by his daughter. The same welcome is extended to two other members of the Council, Mr. Chapuis and Mr. Jenne as well as their ladies. These three members of the Council have been associated with the College since its foundation and they sacrifice a great deal of their time for its administration.

In addition, there are several members of Committees attending this dinner, notably Mr. Max Schneider, Honorary Secretary of the Society and member of the Council.

Another prominent member of the House Committee is amongst our guests this evening. This is Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico, to whose care the welfare of the lady-students is entrusted. I take this opportunity to express to her the Education Committee's appreciation of her continued devotion.

Those of the students who have taken the Diploma Examination last week or the Examination of the Institute of Commerce this week will know Mr. Weaver, Examiner to the London University and Mr. White, who acts as chief invigilator at the Examinations of the Institute of Commerce. I would ask these gentlemen to accept the Education Committee's thanks for their valuable services.

I am sure you are delighted to see present to-night the members of the Teaching and Administrative Staff, headed by the Principal Mr. Levy, accompanied by Mrs. Levy, and Mr. Schneider, the Secretary. There is only one absentee, Mr. Slade, who is getting married to-morrow and our best wishes go out to him and his bride.

No success can be achieved nowadays without the support of the press. This is why we have invited the representatives of the Swiss Press to be our guests. May I welcome first of all the popular Editor of the "Swiss Observer," Mr. Stauffer, who is accompanied by Mrs. Stauffer. Then, I welcome Dr. Egli of the "Bund," and Mr. Keller of the "Schweizerische Depeschentagblatt." Mr. Keller, who is a former student of the College, has recently become engaged and

I am sure you all wish me to congratulate him. Dr. Kessler of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" has sent a telegram expressing his regret at being unable to come here on account of a bad cold.

Modesty dictates that the members of the Education Committee should be mentioned last of all. They are all present to-night, together with their ladies. I would like to thank my colleagues very sincerely for their continued co-operation and loyalty.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we Swiss are assembled here in this hospitable country together with our English friends. While we are in this happy mood let us not forget our homeland, Switzerland, although small in dimensions and modest in power enjoys the respect of other nations. This, I think, is not in the first place due to the fact that many thousands of foreign visitors travel to Switzerland every year to enjoy the invigorating air and the beautiful scenery. It is in a much larger measure due to the fact that our ancestors have gained for themselves the most treasured ideals of mankind and that these have been preserved through many centuries. Let us do our part that they may be handed down to the generation that comes after us.

With this thought in mind, I would ask you all to raise your glasses and drink to the lasting peace and prosperity of *Switzerland*.

The hearty applause which greeted the young and vivacious Chairman was well deserved. Here I would also mention that Mr. Meier read out a letter of appreciation addressed to Mr. Levy, by the Swiss Minister. —

Second on the Toast List was Dr. Cl. Rezzonico, Counsellor of Legation, who was present in a dual capacity, first of all as the representative of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who was unable to attend, and secondly as an old friend of the S.M.S.

He was very warmly greeted on rising, he said:

"On my way here this evening I could not help smiling as a funny thought went through my mind.

One reads a lot in the newspapers nowadays, about how much milder climates have become in most countries, but although some people seem to welcome this change, everybody, I am sure, in his or her heart of hearts is sorry that our modern Christmases are no longer those depicted on Christmas cards, with loads of snow lying on the ground, with trees glittering in the sun under a sheath of frost, with sleighs driven by horses arrayed with silvery bells.

Then I went on thinking what a poor show Father Christmas is making in our modern times and, this is what made me smile, what a poor show I was making driving to your Christmas Fête in a rickety taxi. Of course, you will not enjoy the joke as much as I did, because you will not know that somehow I consider myself as much of an institution as Father Christmas to the S.M.S. as the real Father Christmas is an institution with us all. You see, I have not missed one Christmas dinner at the Swiss College ever since their inception — except, of course, for four years when I did not live in London — and I have spoken at most of them.

I know that the students never attend two functions of this kind, but the Masters and the Members of the Committee do, so do the gentlemen of the press. They have good memories, and whereas I cannot for the life of me recall anything I may have said in my previous speeches, I have a very uncomfortable feeling that they do, and I would not like to show too plainly that I lack imagination by repeating the same thing each year.

I have tried looking up back numbers of the Swiss Observer, where the words of the mighty ones are set down in print, but I found, alas, that my speeches are merely mentioned and not reproduced. You see, I am plainly not one of the mighty ones! So even the Swiss Observer let me down, not that I expect to see anything I may say in print, but as you will realise, it would have helped me not to make a "*bruta figura*" this evening.

There are some words and thoughts that invariably recur in speeches. For instance, nine out of ten compatriots making a speech manage

to bring in one or two "and last but not leasts." Speeches at Cantonal or Federal "Schützefest" invariably include something about "la Patrie qui a besoin de vous au moment du danger." Speeches to Swiss Colonies abroad distinguish themselves with warm messages to the "Patrie lointaine." And my speeches to the Swiss students invariably contain a reminder of the importance of speaking and reading foreign languages perfectly, of the importance of knowing the various peoples with whom we exchange goods and capitals, and so on. I even believe that I invariably make it a point to remind the students of the Swiss College of how lucky they are to be able to enjoy what is, to my mind, the best tuition and the best training at the smallest expense. I cannot help repeating this to you this evening and I feel sure you will bear with me if I discharge this very agreeable task of telling your excellent teachers, the devoted members of the Education Committee, and naturally also the Trustees of the School, what wonderful work they are doing for our country.

Here I would like to add one special word of appreciation for the Principal of the College, Mr. Levy, who is celebrating his coming of age as a Master of the School. Someone else will tell you more about it this evening, and I do not want to poach upon his territory. I am merely anxious to offer Mr. Levy my personal heartfelt congratulations and good wishes.

People belonging to my generation are perhaps better placed than the older or the younger generations to gauge the extent of the difficulties with which younger people, who are embarking on business life to-day, are faced. Your lot, my dear students, is not as easy as was, for example, the lot of that lucky generation who came of age towards the end of the last century. When I tell them that, they will not believe it, but it is true nevertheless. Heads of firms expect a great deal from you and the jobs offered are rare. They expect a lot not because these business men or industrialists have forgotten that they may perhaps have had an easier time, not because they have become pedantic, but because everything nowadays is more difficult, more complicated than it used to be. I have specialised in questions of international trade for fifteen years, and I ought to know something about it. You may be tempted to ask me how it is then that the specialists have not been successful in making things better. But this is another question and its discussion would lead us too far, quite apart from the fact that this is hardly the time to discuss such a problem. We must dwell on happier thoughts this evening, and as I cannot cut short my remarks about international trade let me tell you this: things are better than they were, and you will be the first to benefit by this state of affairs.

This is right, this is as it should be.

If I were a good Father Christmas I would give you all a nice present. To the ladies I would give a choice between the husband of their dreams or a good post as a private secretary. To the men — as the ladies have chosen they are naturally roped into that choice — there is only one thing I could give, and that is a good post.

I cannot do this, but if sincere wishes can be of any help to anybody, you may rest assured that you ought all in a very short time to be the happy possessors of either a good husband, with a good job, or of just a very good job!

And now, just a few words with which I ought to have started my speech. Don't think, however, that this is an afterthought. I meant to say this all along. You will have noticed on your programme, on the page opposite the Bill of Fare, that a Counsellor of Legation has been served to you. This, as you know, is only an "Ersatz" for the real thing. The Minister unfortunately could not attend your Fête, and I need hardly say how sorry he was. Owing to a great number of social functions at this moment, he has to share his pleasures with the members of his Staff, and guessing how very much I enjoy spending an evening with the students and members of the S.M.S., he sent me in his stead. He asked me to convey to you his greetings and his very good wishes.

Now I want to thank you for your fine hospitality. I wish you all once more Good Luck and I also wish that you may enjoy yourselves as much as I am going to enjoy myself."

Long applause greeted the words of this old and trusted friend of the Society.

The next speaker was Mr. C. L. Schenker, a Student of the College, who with an almost perfect accent, expressed, on behalf of his fellow students the thanks to the Swiss Mercantile Society for the opportunity they enjoy of gaining a wider experience both in the English language as well as in other subjects.

The efficient delivery of the speech of this young orator was befittingly acknowledged.

Mr. A. Steinmann, Chairman of the Council of the S.M.S., replied as followed:—

"It gives me great pleasure to reply to Mr. Schenker's excellent toast of the S.M.S. with which he has so graciously coupled my name.

Whilst I appreciate the privilege of being called upon to fulfil this duty for the fourth time, it has one personal disadvantage in so far as I can hardly be expected to say anything original. I know that the younger members and, I think I am right in saying the older ones too, will be anxious to proceed with the second half of the evening so that I do not intend to keep you more than a few moments.

I should like to express the very sincere appreciation of the Council for the energy and devotion which has been shown by Mr. Meier in his capacity as Chairman of the Education Committee. From the remarks of Mr. Schenker I realise that you appreciate the services rendered by the S.M.S. I do not suppose it does Swiss democracy any harm that you should even go to the extent of carrying away with you the portraits of the King and Queen. It is very satisfactory to know and to have it confirmed by Mr. Schenker that the various S.M.S. Old Students' Clubs in Switzerland offer a useful opportunity for our students to practice their English and keep up that close association with this country which it has been possible for them to establish through our Society. The work done by Mr. Burraston in his visits to Switzerland has certainly borne fruit.

My task would not be complete without a word of cordial thanks to the faithful subscribers to our Educational Funds and renewed expression of appreciation of the financial assistance which the Swiss Government continues to give us.

In conclusion I would wish you all a very happy Xmas and hope that in the New Year you will be able to realise your best expectations and that the S.M.S. will have contributed very materially to this possibility."

The Presidents words were greeted with applause.

Mr. J. J. Boos, Vice-President of the S.M.S., then gave the toast to *The College and the Teaching Staff*, he too, like the previous speakers received a hearty reception. Mr. Boos paid a high tribute to Mr. DE Brunner and Mr. J. Pfendler, two of the founders of the College. He gave a short resumé of the history of the College, mentioning that from occupying a few rooms in Henrietta Street in 1922, Swiss House was acquired in 1926. "From that time onwards the College has gone from success to success," he continued, coupling with the progress of the College the names of Messrs. Paschoud, Stahelin and Steinmann, Presidents of the Society and Messrs. Bretscher, Deutsch, Hardmeier and Meier, Chairmen of the Education Committee.

"Up to date over 8,000 students have passed through the Day Classes of the College, and many thousands through the Evening Classes," he said.

The speaker expressed his admiration for the untiring services M. Meier, President of the Education Dept. is rendering, and also expressed the thanks to the Federal Authorities for their constant financial support.

No less a tribute was paid to Mr. A. Levy, the Principal of the College, and Mr. J. J. Schneider, the Secretary of the S.M.S. After shortly referring to social and sporting events, he mentioned the teaching staff, saying "Mr. Levy has been associated with the S.M.S. since January 1918, just 20 years ago, first as an evening class teacher and since 1929 as the Principal of the College, a record of which he can well be proud of. On his side he has an excellent array of teachers, each an expert in one subject or another, who could equal in Commerce our Vice-Principal, Mr. Burraston? the wit of a Mr. Schaap? the verbosity of a Mrs. Paull? the punctuality of a Mr. Thompson? the shyness of a Miss Benzie? the happy smile of a Mr. Bottoms?"

The applause which greeted the words of the jovial speaker was a very hearty one.

Mr. A. Stauffer, a former President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, referred in his short speech to the fact that Mr. Levy, the Principal, was engaged as a teacher under his Presidency, wishing him "many happy returns of the day."

The last speaker on the Toast List was Mr. A. Levy, the Principal of the College. If applause is a sign of popularity, surely Mr. Levy must be the most popular man in the S.M.S., nearly five minutes of voracious cheering passed before the speaker could start his oration.

Mr. Levy, who seemed deeply touched by the hearty reception which he received, thanked Messrs. Boos and Stauffer for their kind words on his behalf.

He continued by saying: "I am very deeply touched by that beautiful message, His Excellency, the Swiss Minister, has sent me this evening. No words of mine can adequately express my thanks for those kind wishes."

Mr. Levy then thanked Mr. Rezzonico for the great interest he has always shown in the College, and his much appreciated help so willingly given. The speaker also shortly referred to the social

activities that go on at Swiss House, as well as the sports events, saying "We all very strongly believe in that old Latin saying: *Mens sana in corpore sano*, and we try in every possible way to encourage our students in their study and also in their play, i.e., in their pleasure."

Mr. Levy then made a passionate appeal to the students, in saying: "some years ago I used a very strange expression which perhaps I may be permitted to repeat this evening. Every one of you students is in the Swiss Diplomatic Service. By that it is meant that wherever you go, Switzerland, your native country, will be judged by what you do and what you say. So, therefore, no matter where you go you are expected to pay a due obedience to the laws of the State which may for a time become the place of your residence or afford you its protection and that not for yourselves but for the benefit of your beloved Switzerland."

On the conclusion of this sincere address, the gathering witnessed another great ovation.

This was the last speech, and the company was asked to adjourn to one of the adjoining hall, where a most enjoyable "Schmitzbank" was recited by one of the students.

Then suddenly the orchestra started a lively dance tune, and all and sundry started to swing around.

A *Polonaise*, headed by Mr. and Mrs. Meier and under the direction of Mr. J. J. Schneider, was a most enjoyable affair, all the more as the couples had to pass underneath a large bunch of mistletoe, with the obvious result of receiving or giving a kiss. Now some were very shy, some just a little so, and others seemed to enjoy it, judging from their unwillingness to move on and give the other fellow a chance.

It was a fine evening and I feel sure, the memory of it will remain with all those present for a very long time.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Friday, December 31st, at 8 p.m. — "Schweizerbund" (Swiss Club) — New Year's Eve Dinner and Ball — at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1. (Extension till 2 a.m.)

Tuesday, January 4th — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting — (preceded by dinner at 7.15 sharp) at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.

Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762).

(Langue française).

79, Endell Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.
(Near New Oxford Street).

Samedi 25 décembre, Jour de Noël, à 11hrs:
Culte et Ste. Cène: Mr. Emery.

Dimanche 26 déc.: Culte à 11hrs: Mr. Emery.
(Le culte du soir est supprimé.)

Lundi 27 déc. à 5 hrs.: Arbre et Fête de Noël
avec participation des enfants de l'Ecole du Dimanche.

Thé entre 4h. et 5h.

Vendredi 31 déc. à 8h.30. — Service liturgique de
Fin d'Année, suivi de Ste. Cène.

(L'arbre sera rallumé.)

Dimanche 2 janvier, culte du Nouvel An:
à 11h. et à 6h.30: Mr. Emery.

(L'Ecole du Dimanche est supprimée.)

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE (Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.
(near General Post Office.)

Samstag, den 25. Dezember 1937, Christtag.

11 Uhr Morgens — Gottesdienst und Feier
des Heiligen Abendmahls.

Kein Abendgottesdienst.

Sonntag, den 26. Dezember 1937.

Weihnachtsbaum in der Kirche 4 Uhr Nach-
mittags.

Der Morgengottesdienst fällt aus.

Freitag, den 31. Dezember 1937, Sylvester.

7 Uhr Abends — Gottesdienst und Feier des
Heiligen Abendmahls.

Der Weihnachtsbaum wird wieder angezündet
werden.